

What is the purpose for the writing of the Gospel of Matthew?

- As we stated earlier, the Gospel of Matthew was written for the Jews to proclaim the arrival of the long-awaited Messiah—Jesus of Nazareth.
- Secondly, Matthew wanted the Jews to consider that if Jesus was the promised Messiah, then they crucified the Anointed One of the Lord.
 - “What would now become of them? Was God through with them?”¹⁵
 - Matthew encourages the Jews in this gospel explaining “for though their act of disobedience would bring judgment on that generation of Israelites, God was not through with His people. His promised kingdom would yet be instituted with His people at a future time. In the meantime, however, believers are responsible to communicate a different message of faith in this Messiah as they go into all the world to make disciples among all nations.”¹⁶

The Structure of the Gospel of Matthew

What is the structure of the Gospel of Matthew? How is it divided?

- According to the *HCSB Study Bible*:
 - The book is divided into three major sections. “He introduced new major sections with the words ‘from then on Jesus began to’ (4:17; 16:21). These transitional statements divide the Gospel into the introduction (1:1-4:16), body (4:17-16:20), and conclusion (16:21-28:20).”¹⁷
 - The book is divided into five major blocks of teaching. Each of these blocks of teaching “concludes with a summary statement (8:1; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1).
 - Matthew 8:1 – “When he came down from the mountain...” after the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7).
 - Matthew 11:1 – “When Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples...” after his instructions to his disciples about ministry (Matthew 10).

¹⁵ *TBKC-NT* 16.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *HCSB Study Bible* 1606.

- Matthew 13:53 – “And when Jesus had finished these parables, he went away from there...” after teaching the parables about the Kingdom (Matthew 13).
 - Matthew 19:1 – “Now when Jesus had finished these sayings...” after Jesus finished teaching his disciples about forgiveness and humility (Matthew 18).
 - Matthew 26:1 – “When Jesus had finished all these sayings...” after teaching them about the coming of the kingdom and end times (Matthew 24-25).
- The scope of our study will be limited to the life and ministry of Jesus Christ taken from the first twenty chapters of the Gospel of Matthew. Since we will not be focused on the last eight chapters (which deal with the Passion Week, Christ’s resurrection and His ascension), we will not follow this structure of three sections with five major discourses.
 - We will divide this study into chronological segments of information, with particular focus on the teaching blocks within each segment. Our structure contains four sections:
 - **Early Life of the Messiah** – Matthew 1:1 - 2:23
 - **Early Ministry of the Messiah** – Matthew 3:1 - 9:38
 - Sermon on the Mount – Matthew 5-8
 - **Ministry of Jesus’ Disciples** – Matthew 10:1 - 13:58
 - Mission Challenge – Matthew 10
 - Kingdom Parables – Matthew 13
 - **Final Ministry of the Messiah** – Matthew 14:1 - 20:34
 - Teachings on Humility & Forgiveness – Matthew 18
 - Summary: 14 chapters on the life and ministry of Jesus and 6 chapters on His teachings.

What are some unique features of the Gospel of Matthew?

- The words of Jesus are prominent in Matthew’s Gospel.
 - Out of a total of 1,068 verses in the book, 644 of those contain the words of Jesus.¹⁸
 - That means that 60% of the verses are all—or have portions that are—printed in red.

¹⁸ Richards, Lawrence O. *The Teacher’s Commentary*. (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1987), 518.

- “Of the Gospel accounts Matthew has the largest blocks of discourse material. No other Gospel contains so much of Jesus’ teachings.”¹⁹
- Parables – this book contains 35 parables²⁰—which is more than any of the Gospels according to Lawrence O. Richards.
- The Gospel of Matthew is also filled with quotations and allusions to the Old Testament.
 - “Matthew includes approximately 50 direct citations from the Old Testament.
 - “In additions about 75 allusions are made to Old Testament events. This is undoubtedly because of the audience for whom the book was intended.”²¹
- Richards also points out that this book “records 20 of Jesus’ miracles, 3 of which are found only in this Gospel (Matt. 9:27, 31, 32-33; 17:24-27).
 - Healing of the two blind men.
 - Healing of the demon-possessed man who was mute.
 - The coin in the mouth of the fish they caught.

The Historical, Cultural and Geographic Background of Matthew

As we study through the Gospel of Matthew, we will encounter several different groups, or Sects. Who are these groups and what did they stand for?

- Priests
 - These were a group of Aaron’s descendants who served in the worship of God—originally in the tabernacle and eventually the temple.
 - “These priests were the only ones authorized to offer sacrifices, and were to instruct the people in the meaning of the divine Law.”²²
 - “The High Priest was the president of the Sanhedrin (the Jewish governing body), giving him both religious and political power. The “chief priests” (mentioned 64

¹⁹ TBKC-NT 16.

²⁰ Richards 518.

²¹ TBKC-NT 16.

²² Richards 518.

times in the New Testament) were temple officers with seats on the Sanhedrin, who also had significant political influence.”²³

- Rulers – refers to the members of the Sanhedrin.
- Pharisees
 - A religious sect that “arose in the time of the Maccabees”—referring to the time in between the completion of the Old Testament and the events of the New Testament.
 - “The Pharisees were the conservatives of Jesus’ day. They held to the authority of the written Law, but also to the authority of the oral traditions that interpreted Mosaic Law and taught how it should be applied.”²⁴
 - “The Pharisees were known... for their special commitment to keeping the laws of tithing and ritual purity.”²⁵
- Sadducees
 - “This was the liberal party of Jesus’ time... and was solidly represented in the Sanhedrin. The Sadducees acknowledged only the Books of Moses as Scripture, denied the existence of angels, and believed in neither resurrection nor the immortality of the soul.”²⁶
 - “[T]he Sadducees came from the leading families of the nation—the priests, merchants, and aristocrats. The high priests and the most powerful members of the priesthood were mainly Sadducees (Acts 5:17).”²⁷
- Scribes
 - “The scribes were the scholars of both the Pharisean and Sadducean parties.”²⁸
 - They were highly respected for their knowledge and interpretation of the Law and the Prophets, but Jesus was often in conflict with this group because He questioned their interpretation of Scripture.
- Herodians
 - “This party was political rather than religious in character. It was linked with the ruling family of Herod, and supported Roman rule... [and saw Jesus’] claim to be the Messiah as a political threat.”²⁹

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Richards 519.

²⁵ *Nelson’s Student Bible Dictionary* 194.

²⁶ Richards 519.

²⁷ *NSBD* 228.

²⁸ Richards 519.

- “Although the Herodians should not be equated with the SADDUCEES, they sided with the Sadducees in their pro-Roman sympathies and opposed the PHARISEES, who were anti-Roman. The Herodians joined forces with the Pharisees, however, in their opposition to Jesus.”³⁰
- Galileans
 - “This was a political party, as well as a geographical designation. The ‘Galileans’ were what we would call today ‘freedom fighters,’ who opposed the Romans and the Hellinization of their land.”³¹
 - Hellinism refers to “a style of Greek civilization associated with the spread of Greek language and culture to the Mediterranean world after the conquests of Alexander the Great.”³²
 - Even though many of Jesus’ disciples were from the region of Galilee, only Simon the Zealot was associated with the political party of Galileans before following Jesus.
- Samaritans – the much hated, multi-racial (Jew/Gentile) people group who lived in the land between Judea and Galilee.

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²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ *NSBD* 106.

³¹ Richards 519.

³² *NSBD* 106.